

VCU School of Medicine WISDM Professional Achievement Award

Suzanne E. Barbour, Ph.D.



Suzanne Barbour, Ph.D., recipient of the 2013 WISDM Professional Achievement Award, certainly qualifies as a "triple threat" faculty member for her outstanding talent and accomplishments in teaching, service, and research. In addition to these impressive accomplishments, Dr. Barbour has dedicated her career to supporting underrepresented students in achieving biomedical sciences careers.

Dr. Barbour joined the VCU faculty in 1993 after completing her Ph.D. in molecular biology and genetics at Johns Hopkins and training as a postdoctoral scholar at the University of California San Diego. By 1997 she had achieved the rank of Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, with affiliate appointments in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology and the Department of Biology. In recognition of her accomplishments and her potential as a leader, Dr. Barbour was accepted into the Hedwig van Ameringen Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine (ELAM) Class of 2006-2007. She has a strong record of service on University and SOM committees and in the Richmond community.

Ann Nichols-Casebolt, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Research Development, VCU, recalls, "My first meeting with Suzanne was to discuss her success in securing grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF). It is rare for a biomedical scientist to obtain NSF funding, and she was one of the very few faculty in the School of Medicine who had both NSF and NIH funding for their research." Dr. Barbour has disseminated her work through over 50 publications, including peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and reviews and has served on numerous NIH and NSF review panels.

"Both Dr. Barbour's research and teaching serve as an example of interdisciplinary bridging between Departments in the School of Medicine (SOM), colleagues and academic programs in the School of Dentistry and the Department of Biology in the College of Humanities and Sciences," shares Dr. Jan F. Chlebowski, Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and Associate Dean for Graduate Education, VCU School of Medicine. "The scale of these activities is in itself remarkable." Dr. Barbour's teaching through undergraduate, graduate and professional school lectures, laboratory training, and her service on Student Advisory Committees for Masters and Doctoral students has impacted an exceptionally broad spectrum of students in the biological and health sciences.

The excellence of Dr. Barbour's teaching has been recognized through over a dozen medical school Outstanding Teacher awards, The 2004 School of Medicine Teaching Excellence Award, and the 2005 VCU Distinguished Teaching Award, the University's highest honor for teaching.

Remarkably, given her exceptional record of achievement in each of these areas, what colleagues most often comment on is Dr. Barbour's dedication to creating a new generation of scholars that reflects the diversity of the "real world".

"When I arrived on campus in 2008, Suzanne was among the first persons I met, driven by our mutual interest in recruiting and retaining underrepresented students to our School. It was her vision that organized the various units then in place on the SOM and Monroe Park campuses into a powerful driving

force for diversity." recalls Louis J. De Felice, PhD , Professor of Physiology and Biophysics and Assistant Dean for Graduate Education, SOM. "This effort, which was led by Suzanne, culminated in 4 funded grants and her appointment as Director of Research Training in the VCU Center on Health Disparities." Many institutions would be happy to have the grant funding that Dr. Barbour herself has secured as a PI or Co-PI.

As Dr. Casebolt describes, "...she has been mentoring undergraduate students for almost 20 years, most of whom were young women. Of course, her mentoring goes well beyond undergraduate students to include high school students through postdoctoral scholars... she has worked with them in her lab, taken them to research conferences, and provided them opportunities to learn the roles and responsibilities of a scientist."

"The number of women trainees Suzanne has mentored is significantly above that typically seen for our faculty indicating the esteem in which she is held by women seeking research training at VCU," explains Francis L Macrina, Ph.D., Edward Myers Professor of Dentistry and Vice President for Research, VCU. "She has been a leader in building a federal training grant portfolio that addresses minority access to careers in research and research training. "

In recognition of her significant contributions to multicultural relations and diversity, Dr. Barbour received the 2010 VCU Faculty Presidential Award for Community Multicultural Enrichment (PACME).

In addition to all of these accomplishments, Dr. Barbour's warm and collaborative approach has earned the appreciation of her colleagues. As Dr. Conrad says, "I applaud Suzanne, I admire her, and I learn from her at every turn."

"Suzanne Barbour is one of the most collegial, selfless, and energetic faculty I have ever known," agrees Dr. Macrina. We join her colleagues in appreciating Dr. Suzanne Barbour's accomplishments and her dedication to increasing diversity in biomedical sciences leadership and research.